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Message Text

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ORIGIN AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 AID-05 PCH-02 EB-07 COME-00

CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 RSC-01 IO-10 /051 R

DRAFTED BY AF/C:CUTLER:OSM
APPROVED BY AF:ELMULCAHY
AID/AFR/CWA:GRIFFITH
AF/EPS:WHITE
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R 180005Z JAN 75
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA
AMEMBASSY KIGALI
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMCONSUL BUKAVU BY POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 012336

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAID, BY
SUBJECT: US SUPPORT FOR BURUNDI-RWANDA COOPERATION

REF: (A) BUJUMBURA 639; (B) KIGALI 593; (C) BUJUMBURA 719;
(D) BUJUMBURA 828 (NOTAL)

1. DEPT AND AID HAVE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED EMBASSY BUJUMBURA'S PROPOSAL FOR US ROLE IN PROMOTING BURUNDI-RWANDA ECONOMIC COOPERATION AS WELL AS EMBASSY KIGALI'S VIEWS. THOUGHTFUL DIALOGUE ON THIS SUBJECT CONTAINED REFTELS HAS BEEN MOST USEFUL IN PROVIDING FOCUS FOR EXTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS WASHINGTON. PURPOSE OF THIS MESSAGE IS TO CONVEY DEPT/AID REACTION AND TO INDICATE GENERAL LINES ALONG WHICH FUTURE US EFFORTS MIGHT BE DIRECTED.
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2. DEPT/AID AGREE THAT US INTERESTS WOULD BE SERVED BY

CLOSER BURUNDI-RWANDA ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL RELATIONS WHICH IN LONG RUN HOPEFULLY WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO GENERAL STABILITY IN THE AREA. ACCORDINGLY AGREE THAT RECENT MOVES BY TWO GOVTS TOWARD AT LEAST SOME DEGREE OF COOPERATION SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED AND ASSISTED WHERE FEASIBLE. WHILE PROPOSED US STUDY MIGHT CONSTITUTE USEFUL STEP IN THIS DIRECTION, WE ARE NOT CONVINCED THAT US INTERESTS ARE SUFFICIENT TO WARRANT A US POSITION

IN THE FOREFRONT OF A REGIONAL PROGRAM OR INDEED THAT A REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IS THE BEST INITIAL FOCUS FOR THE CREATION OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STABILITY.

3. DESPITE INDICATIONS DURING PAST YEAR OR SO THAT TWO GOVTS DESIRE TO MOVE TOWARD GREATER COOPERATION, ACTUAL PROGRESS WILL DEPEND PRIMARILY ON SUCCESS IN IMPROVING BILATERAL POLITICAL CLIMATE. THIS PROCESS LIKELY TO BE SLOW AND DIFFICULT, GIVEN LONG HISTORY OF MUTUAL SUSPICIONS AND ANTAGONISM STEMMING FROM TUTSI-HUTU CONFLICT AND INHIBITIONS WHICH THESE STRAINS WILL INEVITABLY CAUSE FOR BOTH REGIMES IN DEVELOPING ECONOMIC TIES. IN THE EVENT US UNDERTOOK ROLE OF GO-BETWEEN, BELIEVE IT ENTIRELY POSSIBLE SOME OF MUTUAL SUSPICIONS COULD BE DIRECTED AT US. MOREOVER, SHOULD BURUNDI-RWANDA POLITICAL RELATIONS TAKE DRAMATIC TURN FOR WORSE, US COULD FIND ITSELF UNWITTINGLY IMPLICATED IN DISPUTE IN WHICH WE HAVE NO SIGNIFICANT INTERESTS OR INFLUBNCE. ON BALANCE, WE CONCLUDE IT WOULD BE POLITICALLY INADVISABLE FOR US TO ATTEMPT PLAY SUCH CATALYTIC ROLE, AT LEAST NOT UNTIL BURUNDI AND RWANDA REGIMES HAVE BY THEIR OWN WILL AND EFFORTS ADVANCED BEYOND CURRENT EMBRYONIC STAGE OF RAPPROCHEMENT.

4. FROM PRACTICAL STANDPOINT EXPERIENCE ELSEWHERE RAISES DOUBTS AS TO WHETHER WE COULD IN FACT SPONSOR STUDY WITHOUT RAISING HOST GOVT EXPECTATIONS OF SIGNI-FICANT US FOLLOW-THROUGH IN FORM OF AID PROJECTS. IN QUITE LIKELY EVENT WE COULD NOT FULFILL EXPECTATIONS--
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AND ANY PRIOR COMMITMENT TO THIS EFFECT WOULD OF COURSE NOT BE POSSIBLE--BELIEVE MUCH OF CREDIT WE MIGHT HAVE GAINED FOR HAVING PRODUCED USEFUL STUDY WOULD BE NEGATED. WHILE EMBASSY BUJUMBURA BELIEVES THIS POTENTIAL RISK COULD BE HANDLED, WE NOTE EMBASSY KIGALI BELIEVES GOR WOULD INEVITABLY EQUATE STUDY WITH MORAL COMMITMENT ON OUR PART TO FINANCE PROJECTS RECOMMENDED IN STUDY.

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5. IN CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES, BELIEVE MOST APPROPRIATE COURSE OF ACTION FOR US WOULD BE TO SUPPORT COOPERATIVE EFFORT WITH SUCH INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES AS UN AND FED, WHICH ALREADY HAVE EXPERIENCE AND LEGITIMATE INTERESTS IN PROMOTING REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN CENTRAL AFRICA, TAKING LEAD. WE HAVE IN FACT ALREADY PROVIDED FINANCING TO GET A UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE TEAM (UNDAT) ESTABLISHED UNDER ECA AUSPICES TO SERVE BURUNDI, RWANDA AND ZAIRE. WE UNDERSTAND THIS UNDAT WOULD BE STAFFED WITH 6-8 TECHNICIANS AND WOULD ASSIST EACH COUNTRY WITH PROJECT AND PROGRAM DESIGN AND PLANNING.

6. WE NOTE FROM REF D THAT EMBASSY BUJUMBURA PREPARING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POSSIBLE AREAS OF AID ACTIVITY IN BURUNDI. WHILE DEPT/AID WOULD WELCOME SUCH RECOMMENDA-TIONS, EMBASSY SHOULD KEEP IN MIND THAT NO DECISION HAS YET BEEN REACHED WITH RESPECT TO INSTITUTING AID PROGRAM IN BURUNDI. BEFORE CONSIDERING POSSIBLE AREAS OF AID ACTIVITY, SUGGEST EMBASSY PROVIDE ASSESSMENT OF POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF US UNDERTAKING BILATERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM. SUCH ASSESSMENT SHOULD ADDRESS QUESTIONS OF WHETHER US ASSISTANCE EFFORTS ARE USEFUL ROUTE TO NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONSHIPS; WHAT US INTERESTS AND OBJECTIVES WOULD BE SERVED AND HOW; ANY UPDATING NECESSARY OF EXCELLENT ANALYSES ALREADY PROVIDED ON INTERNAL POLITICAL SCENE; AND GRB ATTITUDES TOWARD FOREIGN ASSISTANCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. BELIEVE CONSIDERATIONS RELATING TO GRB CAPACITY TO ABSORB AID, DEVELOPMENT PLANS, ECONOMIC POTENTIAL, AND IDENTIFICATION OF ASSISTANCE LEVELS AND SPECIFIC PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS SHOULD BE DEFERRED UNTIL DECISION REACHED WHETHER OR NOT TO PROCEED WITH BILATERAL AID PROGRAM AT THIS TIME.
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7. VIEW FOREGOING SCENARIO, BELIEVE VISIT OF AID OFFICIAL FOR CONSULTATIONS (AS SUGGESTED REF D) WOULD BE USEFUL ONLY AFTER THIS DECISION REACHED. DO NOT CONSIDER TYPE OF INFORMATION CITED YOUR 39 RE AID PRACTICES AND EXPERIENCES ELSEWHERE AS ESSENTIAL TO INPUT REQUESTED ABOVE FOR INITIAL DECISION, WHICH IS ESSENTIALLY POLITICAL. KISSINGER

NOTE BY OC/T: POUCHED BUKAVU.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE012336
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: CUTLER:OSM
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: RR
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: SECSTATE WASHDC
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750139/aaaabigh.tel
Line Count: 163
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ORIGIN AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 BUJUMBURA 639, 75 KIGALI 593, 75 BUJUMBURA 719, 75 BUJUMBURA 828 (NOTAL)
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 APR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <09 APR 2003 by MartinML>; APPROVED <17 SEP 2003 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

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US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: US SUPPORT FOR BURUNDI-RWANDA COOPERATION
TAGS: EAID, BY
To: BUJUMBURA KIGALI BRUSSELS EC BRUSSELS DAR ES SALAAM KINSHASA NAIROBI BUKAVU BY
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006